

Conserve & Protect California's Coast!

The NEW California Coast Resilient Habitats Campaign



Sierra Club California has recently launched the California Coast Resilient Habitats Campaign (CCRHC) to address the effects of climate change on the state's coastal regions. The campaign will focus on protecting, connecting, and restoring California's coastal habitats in order to allow our wildlife to adapt to changing conditions caused by sea level rise and variations in temperature and precipitation due to climate change.

Initially, the most urgent issue facing us is the rising sea level (view maps: http://www.pacinst.org/reports/sea_level_rise/maps/). Even if we are able to successfully implement CO2 reduction measures, sea level rise has already been set in motion. We must now turn our attention to ways to adapt to this inevitability.

Addressing Sea Level Rise

The initial focus of the CCRHC will be to foster the best planning and development policies possible at the State level through the Ocean Protection Council, California Coastal Commission, and Bay Conservation and Development Commission. These policies will influence State activities and work their way to the local level, where most land use decisions are made. In local communities, the CCRHC will show people how to protect shorelines using natural systems that protect and expand habitat. The campaign will be looking for areas that are ripe for positive shoreline protection policies to focus its efforts.

Seawalls: the Wrong Answer

When the sea threatens property, the first response is often to build a seawall. Seawalls are both expensive to build and maintain, and destructive to habitats and beaches. The Pacific Institute estimates it would cost \$14 billion to armor California's coast against sea level rise and \$1.4 billion annually in maintenance costs. Furthermore, seawalls cause the loss of beaches in front and below the wall, create beach access issues, and do not support half the diversity of marine life that natural rocky areas support.

We have alternative options. We can stop placing people and businesses in harm's way by not allowing development in projected flood plains. We can build natural habitats that act as wave breaks to lessen beach erosion, such as kelp forests and oyster beds. We can build dunes and establish vegetation barriers to protect shorelines. We can allow for the expansion of wetlands to assure that these important ecosystems don't drown and to provide flood buffers. And we can make informed choices to concede to nature and plan retreat from the shore, which is often the most cost effective and safest option.

Growing the Campaign

As the campaign is able to fundraise and grow over the next three years, it intends to expand into conservation protection of key coastal core habitats, connectors, and buffers (e.g. marine sanctuaries, coastal forests, wildlife migration routes, coastal and riparian wetlands preservation and expansion), updating the State Wildlife Action Plan to comprehensively address wildlife management in the age of sea level rise and climate change, and protection and restoration of the upland coastal watersheds to remove non-climate stressors on coastal ecosystems such as impaired water quality, water diversions, and fish and sediment barriers.

Volunteers Sought

Volunteers are needed to explore the potential for positive shoreline protection policies in local communities; and to educate public officials, Sierra Club members and community members on the use of natural systems to protect the shoreline and wildlife habitats. If you are interested in getting involved, you are encouraged to call Lesli, CCRHC Organizer, at 916-557-1100x105. Please come and make a difference: Conserve & Protect California's Coast!